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Reid Hoffman is exploring a new anti-Trump boycott - Vox

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One of the Democratic Party's biggest donors is exploring a new anti-Trump boycott

After the boycott of Facebook, Reid Hoffman thinks maybe it's time for a boycott of Trump.

By Theodore Schleifer | @teddyschleifer | Jul 2, 2020, 5:18pm EDT



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Reid Hoffman, former executive chair of LinkedIn, on July 11, 2017, in Sun Valley, Idaho. | Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Amid the advertiser boycott of Facebook, one of the Democratic Party's biggest megadonors, Reid Hoffman, is exploring ways to launch a similar boycott of President Trump and his White House.

Hoffman, the billionaire founder of LinkedIn, **could spend as much as \$100 million this election cycle** and has elbowed his way into becoming one of the most powerful players in Democratic politics. So what issues attract his attention — and, correspondingly, his money — matter because they can help explain where the progressive movement will focus over the summer.

Hoffman foreshadowed what may be his next political move this week when asked about the building protest movement against Facebook over **its unwillingness to aggressively moderate Trump's inflammatory posts**. Hoffman volunteered a revealing tidbit about his political thinking.

"Frankly, on the political side, one of the things I've been thinking about trying to go stimulate for the next month is an anti-Trump boycott," Hoffman said in an interview on Tuesday with Anne-Marie Slaughter, the head of New America. "The various forms of enrichment with Mar-a-Lago and all the rest should not be part of an American political system. It should be protested in economic ways, as well as political ways."

Hoffman didn't offer much detail about the idea, which is said to be in its early stages. But if companies are thinking about ways to stand up against racial hatred, Hoffman's team thinks they shouldn't just boycott Facebook, which broadcasts that hatred, but rather those who voice it, like Trump.

Based on some of his past conversations, the move by Hoffman could resemble an effort like Grab Your Wallet, **a campaign that convinced some retailers**, including Nordstrom and T.J. Maxx, to drop products associated with Trump and his family. According to Shannon Coulter, the campaign's leader, Hoffman's team reached out to Grab Your Wallet and has had extensive talks about a donation since 2017. Hoffman's team has declined to fund Grab Your Wallet because Coulter said they preferred to focus on electoral politics, and she hasn't heard from Hoffman's team in about a year.

Grab Your Wallet has now broadened its work to focus on boycotting companies with board members or executives that have supported Trump politically. **There are signs that**

this type of organizing works — the attendance at SoulCycle fell after a boycott sprang up to protest that the fitness company's majority investor, Stephen Ross, was hosting a fundraiser for Trump.

Another possibility is that Hoffman may try to organize some boycott of Trump properties, such as Mar-a-Lago, which he mentioned in the interview. The problem with that approach, though, is that now, five years after Trump announced his run for president, the brands and people that are willing to be associated with Trump properties, including his hotel in Washington, DC, **have already weathered much blowback and chosen to stick around.**

"Something focused on Mar-a-Lago is unlikely to work, in my opinion, for the same reason it doesn't work to boycott Trump's hotels," Coulter said. "The people who patronize those places are already very much on Team Trump."

The advertiser boycott of Facebook has perhaps proven a model for boycotts of brands. After Facebook repeatedly declined to moderate Trump's inflammatory posts about racial justice protests, a group of civil rights organizations **launched a campaign called Stop Hate for Profit** that has convinced some of the country's biggest brands to pause advertising on Facebook, even if it's unclear whether that will make a serious dent in Facebook's revenue. Facebook recently announced new plans to regulate hate speech.

One of Facebook's early investors was Hoffman's venture capital firm, Greylock, and Hoffman and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg remain close.

What Hoffman chooses to fund is closely watched in the Democratic Party. While he has had his share of stumbles and detractors in the world of politics, he and his team are the tip of the Silicon Valley spear as the **tech community marshals its considerable resources to boost presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden.**

But there are some signs that the tech community and Biden still don't see totally eye to eye. Biden **has called for** the immediate revocation of Section 230, **the landmark law that protects publishers** like Facebook from liability over what third parties say or do on the platform.

Asked what Hoffman, **who has advised Biden on digital campaigning**, would say to Biden about Section 230, Hoffman drew some distance from his chosen candidate, saying that there should be "less-absolute-than-publisher liability, but more than no liability." A viewer of the session asked Hoffman **about a recent Washington Post editorial** saying

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that both Biden and Trump — who also wants to revoke Section 230, albeit for different reasons — were wrong.

“Both of those two positions seem to be badly put from an American values perspective,” Hoffman said.

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